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G. MASSON'S *La Lyre française* (M. n.).

The larger print edition of BELLOWS' French-English and English-French *Dictionary* (H.H.) is unquestionably the best of its kind. Its distinguishing features are set forth in the book itself. It is all that the ordinary student needs. Teacher's price, \$1.00.

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THE FRENCH LITERATURE OF LOUISIANA IN 1889 AND 1890.

I.

ALTHOUGH the Louisianians of French descent study the English language, appreciate the beauty of its literature, and understand how important it is that every American should speak English, yet they remain sincerely attached to the language of their forefathers and are striving to maintain it in all its purity in Louisiana. Their aim (I repeat it here) is certainly praiseworthy and their labors disinterested, for they write for a limited public and can expect no pecuniary advantage and but very little fame. I have before endeavored to make known to our American professors the efforts of my countrymen, and have given a brief account of our French literature from its origin to the year 1888.¹ I now desire to present a sketch of the literature of 1889 and 1890.

In 1889 no work appeared in book form except my 'Sept grands auteurs du XIX^e siècle.' Our literature, since the foundation of "*l'Athénée Louisianais*" in 1876, has generally been published in the *Comptes Rendus* of that society. These publications form each year a volume of some two hundred pages large octavo—a fact worthy of note, as I have before indicated, if we consider that the papers are all written by the members of the Society, and for the sole purpose of maintaining the French language in Louisiana.

The name which is seen oftener in the *Comptes Rendus de l'Athénée* is that of Dr. ALFRED MERCIER, who, although advanced in years, has all the enthusiasm of a

¹ See 'Transactions of Modern Language Association' for 1886, vol. ii, page 31, and MOD. LANG. NOTES, vol. iv, pages 97, 228.

young man. An excellent Greek and Latin scholar, a learned physician, an admirer of DANTE and of CERVANTES, he writes elegantly and forcibly both prose and verse. His works are well known in the State, and he enjoys a well-deserved popularity.

"Sommeil, Rêves, Somnambulisme" is an interesting article by Dr. MERCIER. He calls attention to the strange phenomena accompanying sleep, and mentions how Captain ROSEL, who was shot during the Commune, required so much sleep that he had to be awakened by the jailor on the morning of the execution; while the Emperor JUSTINIAN, on the contrary, needed only one hour's sleep in the twenty-four. Dreams, in particular, are carefully considered by the author, and we take an interest in the subject on account of its importance in the ancient drama and in the classic French tragedies.

In 1843, on completing his studies in Paris, Dr. MERCIER took a trip to the Pyrenees. He describes his journey in a charming manner, from notes taken at the time. Before leaving Paris he went to pay a visit to his old friend, LAKANAL, the celebrated *Conventionnel*, whose name is associated with the history of education in Louisiana as President of the College of Orleans. LAKANAL introduced the young Louisianian to the great sculptor DAVID (of Angers).

The author gives an excellent idea of the Pyrenees country, and of the customs of the inhabitants both in France and in Spain. Although half a century has passed since the Doctor visited the mountains which nature has placed as a barrier between the two great nations, and although the world has made wonderful progress in civilization since then, it is doubtful whether in these mountainous regions there has been any considerable change in the manners and customs of the people. The Spanish priests must still be drinking from the *porro*, the young men must be hunting the fleet mountain deer, the bear and the wolves, and the hostess of the inn on the roadside must still be selling to the travellers, with a coquettish smile, red, green, blue or yellow garters embroidered with gold or silver on which love mottoes are inscribed. The same costumes must still be

seen as fifty years ago: everything on the high mountains seems to be as immutable as the hard rocks which form them. On leaving the Pyrenees the Doctor exclaims:

"Solitudes grandioses et douces, paix profonde, ciel étoilé, nuit poétique et propice aux méditations où l'âme sonde l'infini qui est en dehors d'elle et celui qui est en elle, est-ce la dernière fois que je jouis de vous? Je l'ignore; en tout cas, adieu et merci!"

In "Rôle des Médailles dans l'histoire des Pays-Bas" Dr. MERCIER makes an analysis of one of EDGAR QUINET's noblest books, 'Fondation de la République des Provinces-Unies.' The author pays a magnificent tribute to WILLIAM THE SILENT and MARNIX DE SAINTE ALDEGONDE, and shows how the liberators of the Netherlands, in their incessant warfare against PHILIP, used medals as a means of rousing the anger and the patriotism of the people. "The Revolution," says QUINET, "spoke incessantly to the people through thousands of brass mouths."

Mrs. EULALIE L. T. ALEX contributes two charming articles to the *Comptes Rendus* for 1889: "Le Livre d'or de la comtesse Diane," and "Maximes de la vie par la comtesse Diane." Both studies express a philosophy delicate and entirely modern:

"Quelle question redoutez-vous le plus? —Celle pour laquelle une réponse serait un aveu."

"Aimez-vous mieux un coup de pied ou un coup de patte? —Un coup de patte, parce que je peux le rendre en restant bien élevée."

"Quelle est la personne la plus aimable? —Celle qui me persuade que c'est moi."

"Il est rare que la tête des rois soit faite à la mesure de leur couronne."

"C'est le bruit que font nos illusions en s'envolant qui nous les révèle."

"Utilité des Langues Vivantes," by Mr. FRANÇOIS TUJAGUE, is a strong plea in favor of the teaching of the modern languages, and especially of French. He mentions the fact of the closer relations of men in different countries by means of constant travel, and states how immigrants feel at home in a foreign country, if they are able to speak the language of the people among whom they live. He speaks of the admirable literature of the modern nations and of the great thoughts embodied in their masterpieces, and concludes

by urging the Louisianians to study French most diligently. He has faith in the perpetuity of the French language in Louisiana and says:

"Croire que dans un avenir plus ou moins rapproché, le français ne sera plus, en Louisiane, qu'un souvenir d'antan, c'est avoir du bon sens des Louisianais, de leur esprit de prévoyance et de leur amour du progrès une opinion erronée."

Dr. G. DEVRON makes some very interesting contributions to the early history of Louisiana and publishes a letter giving curious details of the life in New Orleans four years after the foundation of the city. The letter was written by Father RAPHAEL, *Capucin supérieur de la Mission*. Dr. DEVRON restores with critical accuracy a number of words which had been torn from both edges of the paper. The same letter was translated later by Mr. JOHN GILMARY SHEA, and published in volume ii of the Historico-Catholic Society of the United States.

Mr. J. L. PEYTAVIN gives an ingenious explanation of a problem in physics; l'abbé LANGLOIS contributes a scientific paper on botany; Mr. H. DUBOS, a well written article on the "Avantages de la culture des Arts"; and Dr. MERCIER and Mr. E. GRIMA publish some graceful poems.

Mr. GRIMA's "Pour un Nickel" is light and witty, and BOILEAU would have called it "un élégant badinage." A young lady enters a city car and on going to pay her fare perceives that she has forgotten her purse. She stands confused and is on the point of leaving the car, when a young man, like a true knight, rises to relieve her of her embarrassment and steps hurriedly to the box to deposit the needed nickel. But, oh horror! he seeks in vain in his pockets, not a cent is to be found. He already thinks of rushing out and of going into exile in some distant land, when on touching his watch chain he finds a nickel in a ring:

"Marthe, ma vieille bonne, au moment de mourir
Voulant me laisser d'elle un dernier souvenir,
L'avait mis en mes mains: "Tiens, prends-le, me dit-elle,
Pour te porter bonheur."—Et Marthe disait vrai,
Mon bonheur est parfait.—La jeune demoiselle
Qui n'avait pas de bourse et pour qui je payai,
L'inconnue aux yeux noirs, est maintenant ma femme.
Entre ses frêles mains j'ai pu risquer mon âme.—
Oui, nous sommes heureux, et, fortuné mortel,
Mon bonheur si parfait n'a coûté qu'un nickel."

No analysis could give an idea of the harmonious verses of Dr. MERCIER. Let us quote the dialogue between the Suns and the Night:

LES SOLEILS.

Nous sommes les Soleils, les vainqueurs de la Nuit;
Devant nous elle fuit et meurt. A nous l'espace!
A nous l'éternité, nous dont la flamme enlace
L'immensité profonde et partout resplendit!

Gloire à nous, rois puissants dont le regard féconde
Les sphères décrivant leur orbe autour de nous!
Notre chaude clarté réjouit chaque monde;
La vie est un bienfait de nos feux purs et doux.

A nous seuls appartient l'étendue infinie;
Immortels nous flottons et toujours avançons.
Nés de nos mouvements, des fleuves d'harmonie
Circulent dans l'éther partout où nos passons.

LA NUIT.

Vous mentez, ô Soleils! à moi seule appartient
L'espace sans limite et l'immortalité.
Au-delà des lointains où vos rayons parviennent,
Mon noir abîme étend sa morne immensité.

Semés de loin en loin sur mon manteau d'ébène,
Vous ornez pour un temps ma sévère beauté;
Il n'est permis qu'à moi, moi votre souveraine,
De dire à haute voix:—'J'ai toujours existé.

D'innombrables soleils, avant votre naissance,
Etincelaient déjà sur l'abîme sans fond:
Où sont-ils aujourd'hui? qui pleure leur absence?
Qui cherche leur éclat disparu de mon front?

Cessez donc, orgueilleux, de chanter vos louanges!
Eclairez, échauffez les mondes habités.
Je vous absorberai, passagères phalanges,
Quand par le temps qui fuit vos jours seront comptés."

Our literature published in 1889 is certainly very creditable. I shall try to prove in a second paper that the works which appeared in 1890 are likewise interesting and important.

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THE PHONETICS OF FRENCH *noël* AND *novel*, PROVENÇAL *nadal* AND *noël*.

FRENCH *noël* is a word whose etymology (NATALE) is certain, but whose form—which should regularly be *naël*—has never been satisfactorily accounted for.¹ Of those who have treated the word, some have contented them-

¹ Deserving to be cited by the side of the happiest inspirations of ISIDORE de Seville, is the alternative etymology of *no l* offered by the 'Grand Dictionnaire Larousse,' s. v.: "ou abréviation d' *Emmanuel*, c'est dire, Dieu avec nous, qui est un des surnoms de Jésus."

selves with pointing out its irregularity, others have suggested explanations that have not gained acceptance.²

SCHELER, for example ('Dictionnaire,' 3^e éd. 1888) remarks, s. v., "pour cette substitution de *o* à *a*, cp. vfr. *noer*, it. *notare*, du lat. *natare*, fr. *poêle*, subst. fém. p. *paële*."—HORNING, in his "Précis de la phonétique etc.," p. 11, §27^b (Introduction to BARTSCH and HORNING, 'La Langue et la littérature françaises,' 1888), remarks: "Dans d'autres cas, il y a eu assimilation de l'*a* à la voyelle suivante, parfois sous l'influence d'un *b* ou d'un *v*: pour (PAVOREM), *poun* (PAVONEM), *taons* (*TABANNUM), *pouz* (fr. repu). Remarquez encore *o* dans *soolle* (SATULLAT), *noel* (NATALIS), *noer* (NATARE)."

In his minutely detailed review of this work, (*Romania* xviii, pp. 136-159, M. GASTON PARIS comments as follows (p. 158, ll. 8, 9) on this last observation: "*Soolle*, d'une part, *noer* d'autre, sont des phénomènes bien différents et de date et de caractère," thus deliberately refraining from expressing any opinion on the subject of *noël*. SCHWAN, however, in his 'Grammatik des Altfranzösischen' (1888), §124, Anm., had meanwhile ventured a new explanation:

"Eine scheinbare Ausnahme macht *Noël*, das man von NATALEM (sc. *diem*) ableitet; es ist aber vlt. NOTALE (zugleich eine Anbildung an *notus*) anzusetzen (vgl. §54)." But this is perhaps a case for laying to heart MEYER-LÜBKE's timely warning ('Grammaire des langues romanes' i, p. 7), "On ne peut être assez prévenu contre l'abus qui consiste à mettre sur le compte du latin vulgaire tout ce qu'on ne peut expliquer sur le champ."

More recently (*Romania* for Jan. 1890, vol. xix, p. 124), in a review of the 'Recueil de mémoires philologiques présenté à Gaston Paris. . . par ses élèves suédois,' M. PARIS openly objects to an explanation there attempted of the irregularity in *noël*: "*Noël* est propre au français, mais il est si ancien qu'il est peu probable qu'il soit dû au besoin d'écarter le groupe *aë*, qui, en ancien français, était très habituel: c'est un mot qui attend encore une explication.—To this he adds in a foot-

² LITTRÉ, s. v., does not remark the peculiarity. All the dialect forms cited by him show *o* in the first syllable.